

التَّبَصُّرَةُ

At-Tabsirah

A Detailed Guide to Sujuud
As-Sahw

By

Husayn Mubarak Adelokun
(Elhusayn)

AT-TABŞIRAH

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FOREWORD

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and blessings and peace be bestowed upon the most honorable of messengers, our Prophet Muhammad.

Salat, the cornerstone of our faith, is a profound act of devotion and a direct link to our Creator. Yet, as humans, we are prone to forgetfulness and error.

This book, “At-Tabsirah: A Detailed Guide to Sujūd As-Sahw,” addresses this crucial reality head-on.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) established the prostration of forgetfulness (Sujūd As-Sahw) as a means to rectify mistakes in prayer. Through a command from Allah to observe prayer and a direct example from our Prophet to “Pray as you have seen me praying,” we are given a clear path to follow.

Author Mubarak Adelokun Husayn has carefully compiled the authentic traditions and scholarly views to clarify the rulings, reasons, and procedures for Sujūd As-Sahw. His unique approach, which combines simple jurisprudential principles with practical examples, makes this often-complex subject accessible to all.

I highly recommend this book as an essential guide for perfecting your prayers and strengthening your spiritual connection with Allah. May Allah make this book a lasting benefit for generations of Muslims and reward the author for his commendable efforts.

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PREFACE

All praise is due to Allah, the praise of the grateful. Thanks are also due to Him, the thanks of the humble who acknowledge their shortcomings. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, the Guardian of the righteous. And I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger, the truthful and trustworthy. May peace and blessings be upon his pure family, his noble companions, and all who follow their path, adhere to their way, and walk in their footsteps until the Day of Judgment.

This book is a modest effort to clarify one of the gracious allowances in Islamic jurisprudence: *Sujūd as-Sahw*, the prostration of forgetfulness in *ṣalāh*. After observing how often people become confused about this topic, and how frequently questions are raised concerning its details, I felt the need to contribute, within the limits of my knowledge, by compiling a simple and practical guide for fellow Muslims.

In preparing this work, I have relied solely on authentic *aḥādīth* of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and the opinions of trusted scholars. I have not presented any opinion except one supported by a recognized authority in Islamic scholarship. If you come across a view in this book that differs from what you are used to, understand that it is simply the position I found stronger and more convincing, as a fellow student of knowledge, not as a scholar.

This book is not restricted to one school of thought. Rather, I have drawn from the views of scholars across the different madhāhib, with the goal of making this subject easier to understand and accessible to a wide audience.

Practical examples and evidence-based rulings have been included to make the discussion clearer and more relevant to everyday situations. My hope is that this book will not only provide clarity but also remind us of the beauty and completeness of our religion and inspire gratitude to Allah for the gift of Islam.

I ask Allah, the Most High, to make this effort sincerely for His sake, to accept it, and to make it a means of drawing closer to Him. May He forgive both the author and the readers for any mistakes or shortcomings. Indeed, He is the One who is able to do that.

Husayn Mubarak Adelokun

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INTRODUCTION

Ṣalāh is among the greatest means of drawing closer to Allah. It is the second pillar of Islam after the shahādah, and the first deed to be accounted for on the Day of Judgment. Because of its high status in the dīn, the Sharī'ah has provided detailed guidance not only on how to perform ṣalāh correctly, but also on how to address mistakes that occur during it.

One of the ways the Sharī'ah accommodates human forgetfulness is through Sujūd as-Sahw, the prostration of forgetfulness. Whether a person omits a part of the ṣalāh, adds something unintentionally, or becomes confused, Sujūd as-Sahw allows for correction without the need to repeat the ṣalāh. It reflects the mercy and completeness of Islam.

Yet many Muslims remain unsure about the correct application of this ruling. Common questions arise: When should Sujūd as-Sahw be performed, before or after the taslīm? Does it apply to missing pillars (arkān), forgotten obligations (wājibāt), or unintentional additions? What if the mistake comes from the Imām or the ma'mūm?

Failure to understand these rulings can lead to invalid ṣalāhs or a constant state of doubt and confusion. This book was written to remove that uncertainty and provide a clear, reliable guide on this important topic. May Allah grant us understanding, sincerity, and acceptance.

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GLOSSARY

Aḥādīth: Plural of ḥadīth; the recorded sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Aqall: The lesser number. In cases of doubt, one builds on the smaller number of rak‘āt.

Arkān: The essential pillars of ṣalāh. Missing any pillar invalidates the ṣalāh unless corrected immediately.

Ba‘dī: Sujūd as-Sahw performed after the taslīm.

Dhikr: Remembrance of Allah through specific phrases or supplications.

Ghalabat al-Zann: Strong assumption when resolving doubt in ṣalāh.

Ijmā‘: Consensus of qualified Islamic scholars on a legal issue.

Iqtidā’: Following the Imām in congregational ṣalāh.

Jahr: Audible recitation in ṣalāh, as in Fajr, Maghrib, and ‘Ishā’.

Jalsat al-Istirāḥah: The brief sitting after the two sujūd in certain rak‘āt.

Ma’mūm: A follower in congregational ṣalāh.

Masbūq: A person who joins ṣalāh late and must complete missed rak‘āt.

Mutimm: A follower who performs the entire ṣalāh behind the Imām.

Naqs: Omission or deficiency in ṣalāh.

Qablī: Sujūd as-Sahw performed before the taslīm.

Rukn: A pillar of ṣalāh.

Sahw: Forgetfulness or unintentional mistake during ṣalāh.

Sujūd as-Sahw: The prostration of forgetfulness, legislated to correct mistakes in ṣalāh.

Sunnah: A recommended practice that is not obligatory but is rewarded if performed.

Tartīb: Performing actions in the correct prescribed order.

Tasbīḥ: Saying "Subḥānallāh" (Glory be to Allah).

Tashahhud: The testimony recited while sitting in ṣalāh.

Taslīm: The final salutation in ṣalāh: "As-Salāmu ‘alaykum wa raḥmatullāh."

Wājib: An obligatory act in ṣalāh, less essential than a rukn. Missing it unintentionally requires Sujūd as-Sahw.

Waswās: Persistent or recurring doubts, often from Shayṭān.

Ziyādah: Addition or excess in ṣalāh, such as performing extra rak‘āt unintentionally

CHAPTER ONE

DEFINITION OF SUJŪD AS-SAHW

The word Sujūd as-Sahw is made up of two Arabic words: sujūd, meaning prostration, and sahw, which refers to forgetfulness or unintentional error. It refers to the two extra prostrations that are performed at the end of ṣalāh to correct certain mistakes. These may be due to forgetting a necessary part, doing something extra by mistake, or simply being unsure about what was done.

Sujūd as-Sahw is not just a rectification for our mistakes in Ṣalāh, it is a mercy from Allah. If Allah had required us to repeat the entire ṣalāh for every mistake, it would have been a burden upon us, though we would still be obliged to do it. But in His infinite mercy, He gave us these two simple prostrations to correct our errors and complete our Ṣalāh. And the Prophet did not only teach this with words; he demonstrated it himself. There are several occasions in his life where he forgot something in ṣalāh and showed his companions what to do. In one well-known incident, the Prophet led a congregational ṣalāh, either Zuhr or ‘Aṣr, and after just two rak‘āt, he ended the ṣalāh and made taslīm. He stood near a post in the mosque, visibly thoughtful. One of the companions, Dhul-Yadayn, respectfully asked, “O Messenger of Allah, has the ṣalāh been shortened, or did you forget?” The

Prophet replied, “Neither.” But after being reminded, he returned to complete the ṣalāh and made two prostrations for forgetfulness at the end. “Then he prayed what he had omitted and made two prostrations of forgetfulness.”¹

Through this, Allah taught us what to do when we forget in Ṣalāh. And this guidance is not just for the companions of the Prophet, it’s for all of us, in every time and place.

That’s why scholars throughout history gave this subject great attention. They dedicated chapters to it in their books of fiqh and hadith. They debated the details, clarified the principles, and shared examples, so that every Muslim would know what to do in those moments of doubt.

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 482

CHAPTER TWO

LEGAL BASIS OF SUJŪD AS-SAHW

(الأدلة على مشروعيتها)

One of the beautiful features of Islam is that it is built on evidence, not guesswork, emotion, or blind tradition. Every act of worship, every ruling, and every practice we adopt as Muslims must be supported by clear and sound proof. As the scholars say:

"الْأَحْكَامُ الشَّرْعِيَّةُ تَقْتَضِرُ فِي ثُبُوتِهَا إِلَى الْأَدَلَّةِ الصَّحِيحَةِ"

“Shari’ah rulings are only established by authentic evidences.”

These evidences are primarily established in the Qur’an, the Sunnah and consensus of the Islamic scholars. They are as follows:

Evidence from the Qur’ān

Although the Qur’ān does not mention Sujūd as-Sahw explicitly, it lays down a principle that supports it:

رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا

“Our Lord, do not take us to task if we forget or make a mistake.”²

Among other numerous verses, this verse acknowledges the human tendency to forget and affirms that Allah, in His mercy, provides room for correction.

² Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:286

Evidence from the Sunnah

The clearest and strongest proof for Sujūd as-Sahw comes from the actions and teachings of the Prophet (Peace be upon him). He not only instructed the Ummah about it, he demonstrated it in real situations, leaving us with practical examples to follow.

a) The Ḥadīth of Dhul-Yadayn – Omission in Ṣalāh

Abū Hurayrah narrated: “The Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) led us in one of the two ṣalāhs, either Ṣuḥr or ‘Aṣr, and he prayed only two rak‘āt, then gave the taslīm. A man called Dhul-Yadayn said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, has the ṣalāh been shortened, or did you forget?’ The Prophet replied, ‘Neither.’ They said, ‘Indeed you did forget.’ So, he returned to the ṣalāh, completed what remained of it, and then made two prostrations of forgetfulness.”³

This ḥadīth shows how the Prophet (Peace be upon him) corrected an omission (naqs) in ṣalāh by completing what was left and then doing Sujūd as-Sahw after the taslīm.

b) The Ḥadīth of Ibn Mas‘ūd – Addition in Ṣalāh

‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd reported: “The Prophet (Peace be upon him) prayed five rak‘āt, so they said to him, ‘Has the ṣalāh increased?’ He said, ‘Why do

³ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 482; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 573

you ask that?’ They said, ‘You prayed five.’ So, he turned toward the qiblah, performed two prostrations, then made taslīm.”⁴

This proves that adding extra units unintentionally (ziyādah) requires Sujūd as-Sahw, and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) did it after the taslīm in this case.

c) The Ḥadīth of Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī – Doubt in Ṣalāh

“If one of you is unsure about his ṣalāh, whether he prayed three or four rak‘āt, let him cast aside the doubt and act upon what he is certain of. Then let him perform two prostrations before the taslīm.”⁵

This ḥadīth is the basis for correcting uncertainty (shakk) in ṣalāh. The Prophet gave us a principle: act on certainty, ignore doubt, and perform Sujūd as-Sahw before the taslīm.

d) The Ḥadīth of Ibn Buhaynah – Skipping a Wājib Act

‘Abdullāh ibn Buhaynah reported: “The Prophet (Peace be upon him) once stood up after two rak‘āt in a four rak‘ah ṣalāh and did not sit for the first tashahhud. When he completed the ṣalāh, he made two prostrations before the taslīm, then said the taslīm.”⁶

⁴ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 572

⁵ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 571

⁶ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 829; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 570

This is the basis for cases where a wājib act, such as the first tashahhud, is unintentionally skipped. The Prophet corrected it with Sujūd as-Sahw before taslīm.

e) The Ḥadīth of ‘Imrān ibn Ḥusayn – General Forgetfulness

‘Imrān ibn Ḥusayn said: “The Prophet (Peace be upon him) once prayed with us and forgot something, so he performed Sujūd as-Sahw, then said the taslīm.”⁷

Consensus of the Scholars (Ijmā’)

Beyond the Qur’ān and Sunnah, the scholars of Islam unanimously agreed that Sujūd as-Sahw is legislated and part of the ṣalāh when certain mistakes happen.

Ibn Qudāmah said in al-Mughnī: “The scholars are in agreement upon the legislation of Sujūd as-Sahw for one who adds to or omits something from the ṣalāh unintentionally.”

While the scholars may differ on details, such as whether it should be done before or after the taslīm in specific cases, there is no disagreement on the validity and necessity of Sujūd as-Sahw when its conditions are met.

⁷ Musnad Aḥmad; Sunan Abī Dāwūd – authenticated by al-Albānī

With this foundation in place, we can now explore the kinds of mistakes that actually call for Sujūd as-Sahw, what they are, how they happen, and how to deal with them properly.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PARTS OF ṢALĀH AND THEIR RULINGS

To understand when Sujūd as-Sahw is required, we must first examine the structure of Ṣalāh. Every act in prayer carries a specific ruling, some are essential pillars, others are obligations, and some are recommended. This classification helps determine whether a mistake affects the validity of the prayer or requires Sujūd as-Sahw.

A. Arkān (pillars) – Must Not Be Omitted

Deliberately or forgetfully skipping a rukn without correcting it invalidates the Ṣalāh. There are 14 arkān, these are:

Standing (if able)

Opening Takbir (Takbirat al-Ihram)

Reciting Surah al-Fatihah

Ruku‘ (bowing)

Rising from ruku‘

Standing fully after ruku‘

Sujud (two prostrations per rak‘ah)

Sitting between the two sujūd

Tranquility in every position

Final Tashahhud

Sitting for the final Tashahhud

Sending Salawāt upon the Prophet

Ending with taslīm

Performing the actions in order (tartīb)

B. Obligatory Acts (Wājibāt) – Require Sujūd as-Sahw if Missed

Unintentional omission of these requires Sujūd as-Sahw. Intentional omission invalidates the ṣalāh. There are 8 Wājibāt, these are:

All Takbirs other than the opening

Saying “Subhāna Rabbiy-al-‘Azīm” in ruku

Saying “Sami‘a Allahu liman hamidah” (by the Imam or individual)

Saying “Rabbana laka al-hamd”

Saying “Subhāna Rabbiyal-A‘la” in sujūd

Saying the dhikr between the two sujūd

First Tashahhud

Sitting for the first Tashahhud

C. Recommended Acts (Sunan or Mustahabbat) – Mistakes Excused

These are non-mandatory. Missing them does not affect the ṣalāh nor require Sujud as-Sahw.

Examples:

Du‘a al-Istiftah (Opening Supplication)

Ta‘awwudh (Seeking refuge before Fatihah)

Saying “Ameen”

Recitation after Fatihah

Raising the hands in the four prescribed places.

When making the takbīrat al-Ihram

- When going to the rukū’
- When rising from the rukū’
- When rising to the third rak’ah after the first Tashahhud.

Sitting in proper posture

Repeating the Adhkar in Ruku’ and Sujud more than once.

Now that we’ve understood the structure of Ṣalāh and the status of its components, we can proceed to discuss the rulings related to omission, addition and doubt respectively.

CHAPTER FOUR

OMISSION IN ṢALĀH – النقص في الصلاة

One of the most common errors that occurs in Ṣalāh is omission—forgetting to perform a required act. However, not every omission is equal. The consequence and the method of correction depend on the nature of what was omitted. Some omissions invalidate the entire rak‘ah if not corrected, while others are excused or can be fixed by Sujūd as-Sahw.

Omission in Ṣalāh can be categorized into three types:

- i. Omission of a rukn
- ii. Omission of a wājib
- iii. Omission of a sunnah

i. Omission of a Rukn

Principle: The Sujud for omitting a rukn is after taslīm | قَاعِدَةٌ: سُجُودُ فَوَاتٍ

الْأَرْكَانِ بَعْدَ السَّلَامِ

Evidence: From the Hadith of Abu Hurayrah " رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ : The Prophet (Peace be upon him) once prayed Ṣalāh (or Asr) and ended the ṣalāh after two raka‘āt. He was informed, then returned, completed the remaining raka‘āt, and made two prostrations after taslīm."

If a person forgets a rukn in ṣalāh and remembers it later, the ruling depends on whether he has reached the same position in the following rak'ah:

If he remembers before reaching the same position in the next rak'ah, he must go back and perform the missed rukn, then continue the ṣalāh from there.

This is because all actions performed after the missed rukn are invalid due to the requirement of maintaining the correct order (al-tartīb) between arkān.

Example: If Bilāl forgets a sajdah in the first rak'ah and remembers during the recitation of Fātiḥah in the second rak'ah (i.e., before reaching sajdah), he must return, perform the missed sajdah, and then continue.

If he remembers after reaching the same position in the next rak'ah, he does not return, as doing so would be pointless, he is already in the position he missed. In this case, the current rak'ah replaces the previous one, which becomes void.

Example: If Ibrāhīm remembers a missed sajdah from the first rak'ah while sitting between the two sajdahs in the second rak'ah, he does not go back, because he has already reached the same spot.

In all the cases, Sujūd as-Sahw is performed after the taslīm to make up for the mistake in the ṣalāh, the principle implies.

ii. Omission of an Obligation

Principle: The Sujud for omitting an obligation is before taslīm | قَاعِدَةٌ: سُجُودٌ

فَوَاتٍ الْوَاجِبِ قَبْلَ السَّلَامِ

Evidence: The Prophet (Peace be upon him) once forgot the first Tashahhud, and when he completed the ṣalāh, he performed two prostrations before the taslīm.⁸

If a wājib act is omitted unintentionally, it is rectified in one of two ways:

1. If he has not yet fully left the position of the missed obligation, he should return and perform it. In this case, no Sujūd as-Sahw is required, because the act was corrected before transitioning completely to the next position.

Example: Aḥmad is praying, and in the second rak‘ah, he forgets to sit for the first Tashahhud. However, before fully standing upright, he remembers and returns to the sitting position. Since he had not fully stood up, he must return and does not need to perform Sujūd as-Sahw.

2. If he has already stood upright (i.e., reached the next rukn), he must not return to the missed wājib, which is the tashahhud, because one cannot go back from a rukn to a wājib, as there is a hierarchy in the acts of ṣalāh. In this case, he continues the ṣalāh and performs Sujūd as-Sahw before the taslīm. This is in accordance with what’s reported by Abu Dāwūd and Ibn

⁸ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari, no. 829

Mājah in the Ḥadīth of Mugīrah Ibn Shu’bah, that the Prophet said: “if anyone of you doubt in his Salah and rise after two rak’ahs before making the tashahhud) if he’s risen fully, he shouldn’t go back, and should perform Sujud as-sahw (before taslīm). However, if he hasn’t risen fully, he should return to perform the tashahhud and Sujud as-sahw is required of him.

Omission of a sunnah

If a Sunnah act of the Ṣalāh is omitted, Sujūd as-Sahw is not required. For example, forgetting to say “Āmīn” or omitting any act other than a rukn or wājib.

Summary

Omission of a Rukn:

If remembered before reaching the same position in the next rak‘ah, return and correct it.

If remembered after reaching the same position, that rak‘ah is void and replaced. Sujūd as-Sahw is performed after the taslīm.

Omission of a Wājib:

If the person has not yet left the position, he should return to it, and no Sujūd is needed.

If he has already entered the next rukn, he should continue and perform Sujūd as-Sahw. Sujūd as-Sahw is performed before the taslīm.

Omission of a Sunnah:

Omitting a Sunnah act in Ṣalāh, such as saying “Āmīn,” does not require Sujūd as-Sahw, since only missing a rukn or wājib calls for it.

CHAPTER FIVE

ADDITION IN ṢALĀH – الزيادة في الصلاة

Addition in Ṣalāh refers to adding an extra action or statement, either intentionally or unintentionally. These additions can be classified into:

1. Structural Addition
2. Non-structural Addition

Structural Addition

The structural part of the Ṣalāh refers to the integral components of the ṣalāh, both actions and statements, that form its prescribed structure. This includes reciting Fātiḥah, saying the prescribed supplications, and performing actions like standing, rukū‘, sujūd, sitting between the two prostrations, and so on.

These structural components can be added either intentionally or unintentionally, and the rulings differ accordingly.

If added intentionally

If what is added is a **statement** and it is added intentionally, the Ṣalāh remains valid, and no Sujūd as-Sahw is required. For example, reciting Sūrat al-Fātiḥah twice intentionally, or increasing the number of tasbīḥ in sujūd or rukū‘. This also includes saying prescribed statements in places where

they are not meant to be, such as reciting the tashahhud while standing, or saying the tasbīḥ of rukū‘ while sitting between two positions. All of these are disliked if done intentionally but they do not nullify the Ṣalāh.

However, if what is added intentionally is an **action**, such as repeating rukū‘ twice in one rak‘ah, or prostrating three times, then this nullifies the Ṣalāh. Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The ṣalāh is invalidated by repeating a physical rukn, not by repeating a verbal one. | تَبْطُلُ الصَّلَاةُ بِتَكَرُّرِ الرُّكْنِ الْفِعْلِيِّ لَا الْقَوْلِيِّ |

If added unintentionally

On the other hand, if these extra actions or statements are added unintentionally, then the principle is as follows:

All additions from within Ṣalāh require Sujūd as-Sahw after the taslīm | قَاعِدَةٌ: كُلُّ زِيَادَةٍ مِنْ جَنْسِ الصَّلَاةِ فَسُجُودُهَا بَعْدَ السَّلَامِ مُطْلَقًا

Evidence: From the ḥadīth of Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه : “The Prophet (Peace be upon him) prayed five rak‘ahs, and the people said, ‘Has the ṣalāh been increased?’ He replied, ‘Why do you ask that?’ They said, ‘You prayed five rak‘ahs.’ So he turned, faced the Qiblah, and performed two prostrations, then gave taslīm.”⁹

⁹ Saḥīḥ Muslim, 572

This rule applies to any unintentional addition of acts that are part of the formal structure of Ṣalāh, like rukū‘, sujūd, tashahhud, extra rak‘ah or statement. If he remembers while performing the extra act, he should stop immediately and return to the correct position. However, if he realizes after completing the addition, the Ṣalāh remains valid and the mistake is corrected by performing Sujūd as-Sahw after the taslīm in both cases.

Example: Ibrāhīm is praying ‘Ishā’. After completing four rak‘ahs, he mistakenly stands and performs a fifth. After completing his Ṣalāh, someone called his attention to it. He must perform Sujūd as-Sahw to correct the unintentional addition, following the action of the Prophet.

If he remembers while still standing, he should return to the sitting position, complete the tashahhud (if he has not already done so), give the taslīm, and then perform Sujūd as-Sahw.

Non-Structural Additions

Non-structural additions refer to movements or actions during Ṣalāh that are not part of the ṣalāh itself, such as adjusting one’s clothing, clearing the throat, or other incidental actions. These are not from the prescribed acts of Ṣalāh.

If such actions are done lightly and within reason, they do not invalidate the ṣalāh and do not require Sujūd as-Sahw. However, if they become excessive by customary standards (‘urf), the ṣalāh becomes invalid.

Our Shaykh ‘Uthaymīn said:

وَكُلُّ مَا جَاءَ وَلَمْ يُحَدِّدْ
فِي الشَّرْعِ بِالْعَرَفِ هَدَيْتَ فَحَدِّدْ

“Whatever is not clearly defined by the Shari’ah—may you be guided—by custom (‘urf), you should define it.”

Summary

Addition in Ṣalāh refers to performing extra actions or statements during ṣalāh, whether intentionally or unintentionally. These additions are of two types: structural and non-structural. Structural additions include anything that belongs to the prescribed acts of Ṣalāh, such as extra rukū‘, sujūd, tashahhud, or recitation. If a statement is added intentionally, the Ṣalāh remains valid and no Sujūd as-Sahw is required, though it is disliked. However, if an action like rukū‘ or sujūd is added intentionally, the ṣalāh becomes invalid.

If the structural addition happens unintentionally, the Ṣalāh remains valid, but Sujūd as-Sahw must be performed after taslīm, based on the Prophet’s (Peace be upon him) correction when he prayed five rak‘ahs by mistake.

As for non-structural additions, such as adjusting clothing or minor movements, they do not affect the ṣalāh if done lightly. However, if such actions become excessive by customary standards (‘urf), the Ṣalāh may be invalidated.

CHAPTER SIX

DOUBT IN ṢALĀH – الشك في الصلاة

Doubt is among the most common mistakes that occur in ṣalāh. It often arises when a person is unsure how many units (rak'āt) have been performed.

There are two main ways to handle this kind of uncertainty, depending on the clarity of one's assumption.

I. Acting on a Strong Assumption (Ghalabat al-Zann)

Principle: Sujud is after taslīm | قَاعِدَةٌ: سُجُودُ الْبِنَاءِ عَلَى غَلَبَةِ الظَّنِّ بَعْدَ السَّلَامِ

Evidence: The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said: "If one of you is uncertain in his ṣalāh, let him strive to arrive at what is correct, complete it, then perform two prostrations after the taslīm."¹⁰

Explanation:

If a person becomes unsure in ṣalāh, but has a strong leaning toward one possibility, he is to act upon that stronger assumption and then perform Sujūd as-Sahw after taslīm.

¹⁰ Sahih Muslim, no. 571

Example: Aḥmad is praying Zuḥr and becomes confused, did he pray three rak‘ahs or four?

If he has a strong feeling that he prayed three, he should build on that and complete the fourth, then do Sujūd as-Sahw after the taslīm.

Similarly, if he is confident he has already prayed four, he ends the ṣalāh and still does Sujūd as-Sahw after the taslīm.

This is in accordance with the principle above: “Whoever acts based on strong assumption in case of doubt should perform Sujūd as-Sahw after taslīm.”

2. Acting on the Lesser Number (Aqall)

Principle: Sujud is before taslīm | قَاعِدَةٌ: سُجُودُ الْبِنَاءِ عَلَى الْأَقَلِّ قَبْلَ السَّلَامِ

Evidence: From the same Hadith of Abu Sa‘īd al-Khudrī: "If you are unsure whether you prayed three or four raka’āt, build on what you are certain of (three), complete the ṣalāh, and then do two prostrations before the taslīm."¹¹

Explanation:

¹¹ Sahih Muslim, no. 571

If the person has no strong assumption, then he should act on the lesser number, assuming he prayed fewer rak'ahs. Then, he must complete the ṣalāh and perform Sujūd as-Sahw before taslīm.

Example: Bilāl doubts whether he prayed three or four rak'ahs. Since he is not inclined toward either, he assumes three (the lesser number), completes the fourth rak'ah, and then performs Sujūd as-Sahw before the taslīm.

NB: Post-ṣalāh doubt is not considered: If the doubt arises after completing the ṣalāh, it is disregarded.

Example: After praying Ṣuḥr and leaving the ṣalāh spot, someone begins to doubt whether they prayed three or four rak'ahs. In this case, the doubt is ignored.

Frequent doubts are overlooked: A person who experiences doubts frequently (waswās) is excused, and their ṣalāh is not affected by such recurring uncertainty.

وَالشَّكُّ بَعْدَ الْفِعْلِ غَيْرُ مُعْتَبَرٍ
وَمِنْ كَثِيرِ الشَّكِّ أَيْضًا مُعْتَقَرٌ "

Doubt after the act is not valid, and frequent doubt is also overlooked.

Summary

1. If there is a strong assumption

The person should act based on what he strongly believes is correct, then perform Sujūd as-Sahw after the taslīm.

2. If there is no strong assumption (build on certainty):

The person should act on the lesser number of rak'āt (i.e., what he is certain of), complete the ṣalāh, then perform Sujūd as-Sahw before the taslīm.

3. If the doubt arises after completing the ṣalāh:

It is disregarded entirely, and no Sujūd as-Sahw is required.

4. If the person frequently experiences doubt

Such doubt is overlooked, and it does not affect the validity of the ṣalāh.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE IMĀM'S MISTAKE AND THE MA'MŪM

It is important to understand that the Imām is appointed in the congregational Ṣalāh to be followed, as established by the clear statement of the Prophet (Peace be upon him): “The Imām is appointed only to be followed.” Based on this, any error committed by the Imām during Ṣalāh that necessitates Sujūd as-Sahw likewise obligates the followers (ma'mūmīn) to perform it, even if they themselves did not commit the error—unless, in some cases, if they were not present during the rak'ah in which the mistake occurred.

In this regard, the ma'mūmīn are divided into two categories:

1. Al-Mutimm – the one who performed the entire Ṣalāh behind the Imām.
2. Al-Masbūq – the one who joined the Ṣalāh late and missed a portion of it.

The Mutimm is to follow the Imām in whatever form of Sujūd as-Sahw he performs, whether qablī or ba'dī, since he was present for the entire ṣalāh.

As for the Masbūq, he must follow the Imām in sujūd qablī, regardless of whether the mistake occurred in a rak'ah he joined or not. This is due to

the general obligation of following the Imām (iqtidā') in congregational Ṣalāh.

However, if the Imām's mistake require sujūd ba'dī, the Masbūq does not join the Imām in it because the Ṣalāh has ended for him with the taslīm of the Imām, and so has the obligation of Iqtidā'. Instead, he rise to complete his missed units of Ṣalāh. The question then arises: will the Masbūq perform sujūd ba'dī after completing his own Ṣalāh?

The answer depends on whether the mistake occurred after he had joined the Ṣalāh.

- If it did, he is required to perform sujūd ba'dī after completing his Ṣalāh.
- If it did not, then no sujūd ba'dī is required from him, as he was not present during the mistake.

Summary:

The Imam is to be followed. If he makes a mistake, followers present during the mistake must also perform Sujud as-sahw.

Types of Followers:

1. Al-Mutimm: Prayed the full Ṣalāh behind the Imam

→ Follows the Imam in Sujud as-sahw whether before or after taslīm.

2. Al-Masbūq: Joined the Ṣalāh late

→ Joins the Imam in Sujud before taslīm (qablī), even if he missed the mistake.

→ Does not join in Sujud after taslīm (ba'dī); instead:

If he witnessed the mistake: performs Sujud after completing his own ṣalāh.

If not: no Sujud is required.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RULINGS ON MISTAKES MADE BY THE MA'MŪM

While much attention is often given to errors made by the Imām in congregational ṣalāh, it is equally important to understand the rulings concerning mistakes made by the ma'mūm, the follower. These rulings differ based on whether the follower is a Mutimm or a Masbūq, and on the nature of the mistake committed. The guidelines for such scenarios are distinct from those applied to the Imām and are outlined below.

General Principle

As a general rule, any mistake made by the ma'mūm while praying behind the Imām is covered by the Imām. The only exception to this rule is when the mistake involves the omission of a rukn of Ṣalāh.

Example: Ibrāhīm joins the Imām from the beginning of the Ṣalāh. During the second rukū', he forgets to say “Subḥāna Rabbiyal-‘Azīm” and only remembers after rising. In this case, since he is a mutimm, he simply continues and concludes the Ṣalāh with the Imām. The Imām has covered his omission, and no Sujūd as-Sahw is required.

However, If the ma'mūm is a masbūq, the ruling differs. Any mistake he makes, whether during the portion he prayed with the Imām or during the

portion he completes on his own, must be corrected by Sujūd as-Sahw, depending on the nature of the mistake, whether qablī or ba’dī.

Example: Aḥmad joins the Ṣalāh in the second rak’ah. While in the third rak’ah he misses one of the wājibāt of Ṣalāh, like “Subhāna Rabbiyal— A’lā” said in sujūd. Since Aḥmad is a masbūq, after making up for the missed rak’ah, he will perform sujūd as-Sahw. Same thing applies if the mistake occurs in one of the rak’ah he’s making up.

If the mistake involves a rukn , the ma’mūm is expected to perform it and then catch up with the Imām. An example of this is someone who, due to heavy congestion while praying behind the Imām, or because he momentarily dozed off during the ṣalāh, missed the rukū‘ with the Imām and only realized after the Imām had risen from rukū‘ or moved on to sujūd. In this case, he should immediately perform his own rukū‘ and then catch up with the Imām, and no Sujūd as-Sahw is required.

However, if the Imām has already reached the same position in the following rak’ah before the ma’mūm realizes his mistake, then the current rak’ah of that ma’mūm becomes invalid because a rukn was missed. In this case, the next rak’ah (the one the Imām is currently in) takes its place. The ma’mūm will then need to make up for it by adding a full rak’ah after the Imām’s taslīm, as explained earlier, with no Sujūd as-Sahw required.

Summary:

General Rule:

The Imām covers the mistakes of the ma'mūm except when the error involves missing a rukn .

For Al-Mutimm: Mistakes in wājib or sunnah acts are covered by the Imām, no Sujūd as-Sahw is required.

For Al-Masbūq: Any mistake he makes, whether during the part with the Imām or the part he completes alone, requires Sujūd as-Sahw, based on the type of mistake.

Omission of a Rukn by the Ma'mūm:

If he realizes before the Imām reaches the same position in the next rak'ah:

→ He should perform the missed rukn immediately and continue with the Imām. No Sujūd as-Sahw is required.

If he realizes after the Imām reaches the same position in the next rak'ah:

→ His current rak'ah becomes invalid. The next rak'ah replaces it. He must add an extra rak'ah after taslīm. No Sujūd as-Sahw is required.

CHAPTER NINE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

Q: What is the general ruling regarding the prostration of forgetfulness (Sujūd as-Sahw)?

A: Sujūd as-Sahw is compulsory for missing any rukn (pillar) or wājib (obligatory act), since deliberately neglecting them invalidates the ṣalāh. For other minor mistakes, it is optional.

Q: What if both an omission and an addition happen in the same ṣalāh?

A: The prostration is performed before the taslīm, according to the stronger view.

Q: What if someone forgets to perform Sujūd as-Sahw itself?

A: If remembered shortly after the taslīm, it should be performed immediately. If a long time passes or the person has left the mosque, some scholars say it is no longer required, while others recommend performing it whenever remembered as a precaution. The latter view is safer.

Q: What is the ruling if someone forgets Takbīrat al-Iḥrām and remembers later, whether during the prayer or after it?

A: If he remembers during the prayer, such as in the second rak'ah, he should say it immediately, count that rak'ah as his first, and no Sujūd as-Sahw is required. However, if he only realizes after completing the prayer, he must repeat the entire prayer, because Takbīrat al-Iḥrām is the key to Ṣalāh; without it, the prayer is invalid.

Q: What is the ruling if someone reads silently in an audible ṣalāh or reads aloud in a silent ṣalāh?

A: Reading silently in an audible ṣalāh requires Sujūd as-Sahw before the taslīm. Reading aloud in a silent ṣalāh requires Sujūd as-Sahw after the taslīm. In both cases, it is optional, not obligatory.

Q: What is the ruling if the name of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) is mentioned during ṣalāh?

A: It is permissible to send blessings upon him silently, and no Sujūd as-Sahw is required.

Q: Is Sujūd as-Sahw required if someone recites more than one sūrah in a rak'ah or moves from one sūrah to another without completing the first?

A: No, Sujūd as-Sahw is not required for any of these actions.

Q: What if someone gestures or nods during ṣalāh?

A: No Sujūd as-Sahw is required.

Q: What if a person weeps during ṣalāh?

A: If without sound, there is no issue. If with sound, it remains valid if it comes from humility or reflection, not worldly matters.

Q: Is listening to someone speaking during ṣalāh allowed?

A: If it happens briefly and unintentionally, no Sujūd as-Sahw is required.

Q: What is the ruling on sneezing during ṣalāh?

A: The worshipper should say Alḥamdulillāh silently.

Q: Can you respond to a person who sneezes during ṣalāh?

A: No, responding by saying Yarḥamukallāh is not allowed in ṣalāh. If said, no Sujūd as-Sahw is required.

Q: What if someone says “Subḥānallāh” to respond to a caller during ṣalāh?

A: It is disliked but does not invalidate the ṣalāh. No Sujūd as-Sahw is required.

Q: What should one do if they pause during recitation, are not corrected, skip a verse, or cannot continue?

A: They should proceed to rukūʿ.

Q: Can one look at the muṣḥaf during ṣalāh to ensure correct recitation?

A: It is disliked, but the ṣalāh remains valid.

Q: What is the ruling on laughing during ṣalāh?

A: If laughter is with sound, the ṣalāh is nullified, even if unintentional. A believer should avoid this and maintain reverence in ṣalāh.

Q: What if a person changes the meaning of a word while reciting Sūrat al-Fātiḥah?

A: If the change alters the meaning, the ṣalāh becomes invalid.

Q: Is Sujūd as-Sahw required in voluntary ṣalāh (nafl)?

A: Yes, the rulings of Sujūd as-Sahw apply to both obligatory and voluntary ṣalāh.

Q: Is tashahhud required during Sujūd as-Sahw?

A: No, it is optional.

Q: What if someone makes a mistake during Sujūd as-Sahw itself?

A: No additional sujūd is required.

Q: If the Imām stands up for a fifth rak‘ah in a four-rak‘ah prayer, and the followers say Subḥānallāh to alert him but he does not respond, thinking he is correct, should the followers stand up with him or remain seated?

A: If they stood up with him out of ignorance, their prayer is not invalidated. However, if they knew (the ruling), they should not follow him; rather, they

should wait for him until he makes taslīm with them, or they may make taslīm before him. But waiting for him is better.

Q: Can a masbūq who has missed a rak‘ah join the Imām when he mistakenly stands for a fifth rak‘ah to complete his own prayer?

A: No, because the extra rak‘ah added by the Imām is invalid and cannot be used by the masbūq to complete his ṣalāh.

Q: Does eating during ṣalāh invalidate it?

A: If done intentionally, it invalidates the ṣalāh. If unintentional, the ṣalāh remains valid and no Sujūd as-Sahw is required.

Q: What is the ruling on the recitation of Fātiḥah by the ma’mūm?

A: In audible ṣalāh (jahri), the follower should remain silent and listen to the Imām’s recitation. This is the view of the majority of scholars. In silent ṣalāh, the follower should recite Fātiḥah silently.

Q: If the Imām mistakenly says taslīm in the third rak‘ah of ‘Ishā’, for instance, and before he is informed and resumes the prayer, some followers who had missed one or more raka’āt have already begun making them up, what should those followers do in this situation?

A: They should stop making up their missed raka’āt and rejoin the Imām, since his taslīm was done by mistake and did not validly conclude the prayer.

CONCLUSION

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. May His peace and blessings be upon our noble Prophet Muhammad, his household, his companions, and the entire Muslim Ummah.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this book, *Sujūd as-Sahw* is a topic in which the scholars have held various opinions. To present every detail would be overwhelming, and for that reason, I have chosen to share only what appears to be the strongest views, supported by the verdicts of reliable scholars.

Indeed, *Sujūd as-Sahw* is both broad and detailed. New situations constantly arise in our daily prayers, and no single book can encompass them all. For this reason, I have endeavored to present not only rulings but also guiding principles from the scholars, so that they may be applied when new cases appear.

I sincerely ask Allah, the Most Merciful, to make this work a source of benefit for you and for the Muslims at large, and to accept it from me as a humble deed, done purely for His sake.

About the book

This book was written to demystify the rulings of Sujūd as-Sahw, a topic that often confuses many Muslims. Through authentic evidence and practical examples, the author aims to help fellow Muslims perform their Salāh with clarity and confidence.

About the Author

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